Unit .23

Session .01

Jesus Teaches About Discipleship

Scripture

Matthew 5:13-16; 6:1-4; 7:19-24

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. **14** "You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. … **1** "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven. **2** So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. **3** But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. … **19** Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** So you'll recognize them by their fruit. **21** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. **22** On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?' **23** Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. **Depart from me, you lawbreakers!**' **24** "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Following Jesus involves being salt and light to those around us.

Option 1

Inform your students that they're going to prepare a children's activity book entitled, "Which one of these things is not like the others?" Each student should get a sheet of paper; that sheet will become a page in the book. Their job is to create some visual with multiple things on it, one of which is somehow different from the others.

For example, one student might draw four Easter eggs, but one egg has a different pattern. Another student might write out three sentences that look the same, but in one sentence a single word is misspelled. Students can make their activities as easy or as difficult as they like. They could also think in categories: for example, they might draw a motorbike, a car, and a boat; the boat is different because it doesn't have any wheels.

Let students prepare and then share their drawings and activities. What neat ideas did they come up with? Point out that just as some characteristic makes one thing distinct on each page of the book, Christians are to be distinct from the world. In fact, you could have your students make a drawing to show how Christians should look different from others. Today's lesson will look at how Jesus teaches Christians to be distinct from the world.

Option 2

Give each student a blank sheet of paper. They are going to make a sketch or drawing. If their birthday falls on an even-numbered day, the title of their drawing should be, "A Life of Purpose." If their birthday falls on an odd-numbered day, the title of their drawing should be, "A Life Without Purpose." Alternate: if your students are not into drawing, they could also compose children's poems. The even-numbered birthdays could compose small rhymes encouraging children to live with purpose (and why), while the odd-numbered birthdays could write poems warning against living without purpose.

Let students prepare and share their drawings or poems. Generally, do people view purpose positively or negatively? Would your students Christians should be people with purpose?

In today's lesson, Jesus will call Christians to live lives of intentional purpose for the kingdom of God.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

The salt that Jesus talked about in this passage was more useful than the salt that saturates the average American diet. In Jesus' day, salt was much more than a seasoning. In a time when there was no refrigeration, salt was an important ingredient in the preservation of food. Without it, Jesus' listeners would have had to deal with rotting beef, pork, or fish. More than the enhancement of flavor, salt served to lengthen the shelf life of food. Similarly, believers find themselves in the business of preservation.

The Bible tells us that creation is groaning for the coming of Jesus, the last Adam, to set things right (Rom. 8:22). We smell the rot of a culture that has turned from the Lord. We are called to be the salt of the earth, preserving the truth of God's Word for a people who need to hear it. We are called to be a remnant of faithful disciples who maintain their saltiness and the preserving power, all for the glory of God.

- **Which of the world's problems can followers of Jesus take part in improving? How can you be involved in that process?**

Anyone who grew up in the church can probably sing the words of the song "This Little Light of Mine" from memory: "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine …" We may not have known when we were younger what the light was referring to, but we could always enthusiastically answer, "NO!" when asked, "Hide it under a bushel?" These simple words declare a profound truth. According to Jesus, His followers are the light of the world. We were made to shine light into the darkest corners of creation for the glory of God. This light does not come from within us. God's Word makes it clear that in and of ourselves, all we are capable of producing is darkness (Matt. 6:22-23; John 3:19-20). It is God who lights our lamp (Ps. 18:28), and He lights it through the sacrifice of His one and only Son, Jesus, the true Light of the world (John 8:12).

- **What are some ways the light of Jesus can be seen by those around us?**

Read Matthew 6:1-4.

We are called to be salt and light to the culture around us, to be set apart and different in the way we act and treat others. And while that is important, the motive behind our actions should be honoring to God as well. As Jesus says, we shouldn't do what's right so that others may see us. No, our motivation shouldn't be to receive praise from doing good, but to do good so that God would get the glory.

- **What are some ways people display their righteousness in front of others today?**

In the age of the Internet, it is easy to practice our righteousness before man; and in the age of the Internet, it is easy to confuse empty practices for righteousness. Think about how addictive it can be in getting likes, streaks, and followers. It can be easy to invest so much energy into becoming influencers in our particular sphere for God's glory that the focus shifts to our own renown. Though our obsession may appear righteous outwardly—it may even be sprinkled with all of the right words, causes, and images—it can be completely self-centered. Our heart motivations need to be to the glory of our heavenly Master, not making followers in our own image.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Matthew 5

13-16. Jesus goes before us as the perfect example of what it means to be the Light of the world. In John 1:1-5, we are told that Jesus is the Light who shines in the darkness, and that the darkness did not overcome Him. In Matthew 5:14-16, we have both a command and a hope. The command is to shine our light in front of a dark and dying world so that by our life the true Light (Jesus) might be illuminated for those lost in the darkness. The hope is that no matter how dark this world might be it will not overcome the true Light.

Rather than teach His followers to fear the darkness, Jesus—whose confrontation with the darkness will lead to His own crucifixion—calls them to boldness in the face of ridicule, isolation, and persecution. Jesus' identity as the true Light reminds us that no matter the results of our shining for His glory, He will be victorious.

Matthew 6

1-4. Jesus' picture of giving seems tough. He uses the metaphor of one hand doing something that the other doesn't know as a word picture to describe that we might be tempted to puff ourselves up and look for the praise of man instead of the praise of God. By the time He delivers this sermon, Jesus has already spent forty days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-17). At His weakest physical point, while He was being buffeted by hunger, Satan tempted Him, telling Him to turn stones into bread. Satan was asking Jesus to perform miracles, not for His Father's glory, but for self-gratification. Jesus sees right through the enemy's ploy. In fact, His final words to Satan reveal the heart of what Jesus is asking us to do in Matthew 6: "Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." (Matt. 4:10).

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 40, DDG)

Mission of the Church

The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

TEACHING PLAN

But not only that, we cannot confuse the show of righteousness with actual righteousness. Saying or doing all of the right things for man to see is not true obedience. The heart of real obedience actively seeks the will of Jesus, not the glorification of ourselves. Jesus calls us to exemplary behavior, and then cautions us against misplaced motives in the midst of that exemplary behavior. He is not merely concerned with outward conformity to His commands but with the right ordering of our priorities before Him.

- **What are some ways we can guard our hearts from seeking to glorify ourselves instead of our Savior?**
- **Why is it more rewarding for us in the end to seek glory for Jesus and not ourselves?**

Jesus tells us that our reward should not be in the applause or approval of people, but in Him instead. His reward far outweighs any other reward we could get through our own effort. He has told us that we are to shine our light before men, but immediately He reminds us that this light is to be shone, not for our own praise or glory, but that others might glorify Him.

Read Matthew 7:19-24.

Now that Jesus has given His listeners' a blueprint for Christian living, He issues an important warning: outward compliance to these commands is not enough to place someone in the kingdom of God. It is not enough to say, "Lord, Lord." Jesus' own disciple, Judas, was a chilling illustration of this fact. He essentially lived with Jesus for the three years of His earthly ministry. He heard the sermons, saw the miracles, and managed the crowds. He sat in the boat while Jesus calmed the sea, ate with the more than five thousand whom Jesus miraculously fed, and was handpicked by the Messiah. If anyone knew all the right things to say and do to persuade people that he was a Christ-follower, it was Judas. And yet, with a simple kiss, Judas revealed his true motives.

We may think of ourselves as above Judas' blatant betrayal of Jesus, but that would be a mistake. If anyone is proof that we can claim to do things in Jesus' name all while being self-deceived and deceiving others, it is Judas Iscariot. He did all of the right things, yet in the end, revealed all of his wrong motives. Likewise, while our semblance of fruit might fool casual onlookers, God is not deceived. Jesus knew that Judas was plotting right under His nose, but He let the story play out—for His glory. Similarly, we might not get caught in our webs of deceit until the day of judgment, but it will catch up with us. Jesus sees through our outward compliance, and we would do well to pray to Him for inward change before that day.

- **What are some ways we can help be protected from deceiving ourselves that we are right with Jesus when in reality we truly don't know Him?**

COMMENTARY

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Matthew 7

7-24. "The imagery is clear: Our way of life—our words and deeds—proves the truth or falsity of our message. For a time we may be able to keep up the pretense of living by the standards and values of the kingdom, but what we really are will eventually be revealed by our actions. No matter what image we present to people, our way of life will ultimately reveal who we really are and determine our fate (7:19-20) … The next contrast that Jesus draws is between true and false disciples. The ultimate reward of discipleship is entrance into the kingdom of heaven and the only way to receive that reward is obedience to the will of the Father (7:21). In the context of this sermon, we know that obedience involves being righteous … What the false disciples are claiming to have done is not wrong, but is insufficient. The fact that Jesus will say: "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" undoubtedly signifies a final rejection and serves as a warning to us (7:23). The basis for their rejection is that they are, in effect, evildoers because disobedience to the Father's will amounts to sin."[1]

Activity

Your students should pretend that a Christian media company has hired them to work on a project. Specifically, the company wants to create a new movie/TV series/comic book about one or two Christian super-heroes: Saltman and Lightwoman (as in "salt and light" from today's lesson).

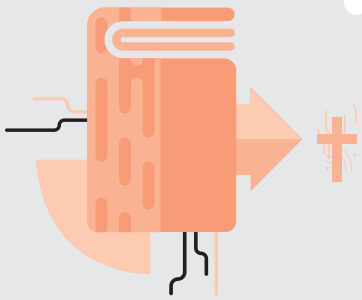
Saltman and Lightwoman go about doing deeds and manifesting attitudes that further the kingdom of God. They wear disguises because they want to be mistaken for Jesus. Your students should come up with an episode for this potential series. They could create a skit showing a possible movie plot or TV episode, or they could make a comic strip for one of the books in the series.

Let them set a fun tone. For example, the 1960s Batman series is famous for having balloon words like "Pow!" and "Bam!" show up on-screen when Batman punched a bad guy. Maybe when Lightwoman does something kind, the words, "Grace!" or "Glory!" might fill up a comic panel, or someone might hold up a sign saying, "Hallelujah!"

Give students time to design costumes, prepare skits, make comics, and then let them show them. Debrief what students had Saltman and Lightwoman do. Did any of the students have them work as a team? What other things could the dynamic duo do? What things could Lightwoman do that Saltman couldn't, and vice-versa? The superheroes are obviously fictional, as would be their scenarios, but how can your students be like Saltman and Lightwoman this week?

(p. 42, DDG) Christ Connection

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers what it meant to be His disciple—someone who has been transformed by faith in Jesus and who lives for Him. Just as Jesus came into the world to be light, we too are to live in the world as salt and light for Him.



JESUS TEACHES ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 5:13–16, 6:1–4, 7:19–24

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

STEWARDSHIP – Using the gifts God has given me wisely without wasting them.

HEAD

What does Jesus mean when He says His people are to be salt in the world?

We identify a tree by the fruit it produces. How did Jesus use this picture to help us understand what it means to be Jesus' disciple?

HEART

We are often willing to serve and help others, but we also struggle to do it for the right reasons. It's much easier to *put on a show* to impress God or get others to praise us than it is to be" salt and light" to show God to the world. What would it look like for you to do each scenario to get attention for yourself? How would you do it if you were trying to point the attention to God?

- Volunteer at an animal shelter
- Give up your study hall to tutor a fellow classmate who is struggling with the homework
- Sing a solo or give a speech at the annual Veteran's Day program

Jesus says that the way we live is like the fruit a tree produces. Does having good behavior always mean our hearts are right with God? How does faith in Jesus change our hearts and, as a result, our actions?

HANDS

Jesus said He is the light of the world (John 8:12) and that His disciples are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). Choose two of the places or situations below and think of 1-2 ways you can display the light of Jesus to those around you there.

- At home
- In the classroom
- With your friends
- In the school cafeteria